

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Chelsee Howell
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Michael Olson
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby
Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Planning Manager Todd Larson
City Attorney Fritz Knaak
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson (attended remotely)
Street Supervisor Shane Turner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kuzma called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Final 2024 Budget/Levy Review Before Preliminary Adoption on 9-26-23

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Staff report and reviewed the updates to the 2024 budget and levy based on the last discussions of the Council. She discussed each of the capital equipment items requested, starting with the switches in all of the municipal buildings.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the requested Chevy Equinox has been removed from the list.

Finance Director Lund said yes and explained that this was for the rental inspector and since this role will be starting at the middle of the year they can use another existing vehicle for the remainder of the year.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the switches have a safety feature to them.

Councilmember Woestehoff explained that these are core networking switches that provide ethernet everywhere. He noted that the price seems a little high. He asked if these will be supported by LOGIS or if it will be supported by the internal team.

Finance Director Lund said it would be LOGIS.

Councilmember Musgrove asked when LOGIS does this if they get a bulk price for these switches.

Finance Director Lund explained that LOGIS gets a government contract bid and they bid out everything at the beginning of the year which saves the City from having to go through the bidding on their own.

Councilmember Musgrove asked why the price of this was high.

Finance Director Lund noted that this price is an estimate.

Councilmember Woestehoff clarified that when he said the price was high, he did not mean that it was higher than average for these items, it is just high in terms of dollars. He added that this price also likely included seven years of licensing.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if licensing is paid for separately.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that it depends on how this is set up.

Finance Director Lund added that licensing is normally under the maintenance department.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that the Governor's Cybersecurity Task Force just came out with their report and there may be some grants available for similar things in the future.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the switches.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the items requested for the government buildings.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the retaining wall and if they discussed pausing this project for this year.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that the retaining wall is in poor condition and that they had \$75,000 estimated for the cost before and now the estimate is higher than this due to the condition of the wall. He shared that the thought is to take a deeper dive and look at this to see what would be the best way to repair the wall.

Councilmember Specht stated that he likes the item of a shorter and more basic wall as it will likely result in less maintenance over time.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if this should still be considered in this year's budget.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby noted that they would prefer to leave this item on the budget for this year and they can start looking into this and getting some designs and ideas of how much this would cost.

Councilmember Musgrove asked why the funding sources for these items are listed but there is no dollar amount.

Finance Director Lund explained that this means that there is enough money in these funds to cover the whole cost.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the government building requests.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the requests from the Police Department. She noted that these will all be covered by the 2023 legislative dollars.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the requested hybrid vehicle will be all electric or gas and electric.

Police Chief Katers stated that this would be gas and electric and added that the Police Department does not have any all electric vehicles. He noted that there has been about a 20% increase in the cost of vehicles, even on the State contract. He stated that they are ordering vehicles this week and hope to have the vehicles delivered in 2024. He added that the vehicles will no longer be sedans.

Mayor Kuzma asked how many miles are put on squad cars in a year.

Police Chief Katers explained that it depends on the officer and noted that they switch out vehicles after 12 hours. He stated that they put around 30,000-40,000 on the vehicles every year.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how many vehicles the department is yet to receive for 2023.

Police Chief Katers stated that there are two more vehicles that they are waiting to receive for 2023.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the Police Department requests.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Fire Department requests. She added that these items will also be funded with the 2023 legislative dollars.

Mayor Kuzma asked if they will be able to sell the old tanker.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the old tanker will be sold.

Mayor Kuzma asked when they should get the new tanker.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that they would hopefully get this next year.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the Fire Department requests.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the civil defense request for two sirens. She noted that this is the continuation of replacing two sirens every year. She reviewed the engineering requests, including the new GMC Sierra which has previously been approved, as well as replacing some survey equipment.

Councilmember Riley asked if there are people qualified to use the survey equipment.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that they have people qualified to use it. He noted that they use it for miscellaneous work.

Councilmember Olson asked about what the survey equipment will be replaced with.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that it would be the same package, just newer equipment.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked about the sirens. He asked if only two have been replaced and if they still have 12 more to go.

Fire Chief Kohner explained that there are a total of 17 sirens that need to be replaced.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there are more funds from the 2023 legislative session that could allow them to add two more sirens to this year's budget.

Finance Director Lund noted that the funds, with the exception of around \$50,000 has already been set aside. She noted that there is also required training that needs to be paid for.

Fire Chief Kohner added that he asked that they reserve some of the public safety funding for mental health and PTSD training requirements that the State has not yet given, but will need to be complied with.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the civil defense and engineering requests.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Public Works requests.

Councilmember Riley asked if they have removed the replacement items from the budget.

Street Supervisor Turner said yes and explained that this will be moved to the 2029-2030 timeframe.

Finance Director Lund discussed the requested F550 4x4 dump and plow truck.

Mayor Kuzma asked if this was a smaller truck for the cul-de-sacs.

Street Supervisor Turner said yes.

Mayor Kuzma asked if this would be in addition to what the City currently has or if it would replace a vehicle.

Street Supervisor Turner stated that this would be an additional vehicle due to the increase in roundabouts and cul-de-sacs in the City. He noted that this vehicle could also stay available for slick roads in the middle of the night.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the City already has a trailer mounted boom lift.

Street Supervisor Turner stated that the City does not currently have a trailer mounted boom lift. He noted that this would be used for tree trimming as well as tree decorating. He stated that they are currently using a front end loader for these things; however, sometimes the front end loader does not give them the height that they need.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this would be used for the right-of-way clearing as well as an area on the bridge between Ramsey and Nowthen.

Street Supervisor Turner said yes and explained that they cannot reach some of these things safely to trim the trees.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this would also be able to be used on trails.

Street Supervisor Turner said yes.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the new scissor lift is a replacement of an existing lift.

Street Supervisor Turner said it is not a replacement as they do not currently have one in their Public Works facility. He explained that they have contractors they pay to come in when they need a scissor lift. He noted that this lift would also help assist with the garage doors if there were ever any issues with them.

Councilmember Riley asked if the scissor lift and the trailer mounted boom lift can do the same thing.

Street Supervisor Turner explained that the two have different functions. He noted that the scissor lift is battery operated and rechargeable while the boom lift is powered by gas or electric.

Councilmember Musgrove asked what height the scissor lift is able to reach.

Street Supervisor Turner stated that the scissor lift could reach up to 25-30 feet.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if they needed the lift at City Hall if there was a way to transport it.

Street Supervisor Turner said yes. He explained that they rented one last year for Public Works that was also needed by the Fire Department.

Councilmember Howell asked how often the City has to rent a lift currently.

Street Supervisor Turner stated that since the building is currently pretty new it is not needed extremely often; however, they do run into these issues. He added, from a safety standpoint, OSHA would prefer they use a scissor lift.

Councilmember Riley stated that there are a lot of new items requested from Public Works, as well as new personnel requested. He shared that he hopes the requests from Public Works are less in the coming years.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said it will be less in the future as these requests have been spread out. He noted that part of this issue in the past is that they did not have the space to store these types of items, so now that they have a larger facility, they are able to store them in-house.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the Public Works requests.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Parks and Recreation Department requests.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the Bobcat wheel loader with blower is used to clear the trails.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes.

Councilmember Riley asked about the F550 plow that is being requested for Parks and asked how it is different than the other one that is being requested.

Street Supervisor Turner explained that this request is for the same type of truck; however, with the current staffing they do not have enough trucks for their daily work assignments which is part of the reason for this new truck request. He stated that neither the Parks or Streets Departments have enough vehicles for all Staff.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked about the price difference and useful life difference for the F550 being requested for Parks and the same truck being requested for Public Works.

Street Supervisor Turner stated that there is a reason that the prices are different. He noted that there is a lift gate on the back of the more expensive truck.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about if they are replacing the 2009 pickup truck and still keeping that older truck in case there is a need for it due to not having enough vehicles.

Street Supervisor Turner explained that a lot of replaced vehicles are being kept to help with having enough vehicles.

Councilmember Specht stated that less mowing was needed to be done this year due to the drought. He asked if this affects the lifespan of the mowers or if they still require a lot of maintenance.

Street Supervisor Turner explained that once these mowers get past the five year cycle they start having a lot of issues with them. He noted that these lawn mowers are being used every day throughout the summer months.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked how the trackless snowblower is different from using the Bobcat loader with blower.

Street Supervisor Turner stated that the trackless snowblower is specifically for sidewalks.

The Council was in agreement with moving forward with the Parks and Recreation requests.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the trailer mounted boom lift will be used for street lights.

Street Supervisor Turner explained that they do not get into maintaining the street lights as they contract with Connexus for this. He added that they do get requests for the street lights being blown open which is something that they would snap shut.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the enterprise fund could pay for some of this if it is being used for utilities.

Finance Director Lund asked if the trailer mounted boom lift could also be used to put up Christmas lights instead of having to hire this out.

Street Supervisor Turner said yes.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the final budget and levy, with an 11.22% overall levy increase. She noted that the capital costs are subject to move and decrease.

Mayor Kuzma asked when they need to lock in these numbers.

Finance Director Lund said by September 26, 2023. She noted that this budget and tax levy will be what is presented at the September 26 meeting and these will also be the numbers that go to the County.

There was a consensus of the Council to move forward with the 2024 budget and tax levy.

2.02: Discussion of Ordinance #23-15 Tobacco and Cannabis Use Within Public Property and Public Places

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report in regard to the ordinance for tobacco and cannabis use in public places. He noted the updates that have been made since the Council first discussed this at an earlier meeting.

Mayor Kuzma noted that these updates clean up the language to make it more clear.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked about the exceptions when driving under Section B of the tobacco regulations and asked if this also applies to cannabis products.

City Administrator Hagen stated that they can add cannabis to this.

Councilmember Riley asked if cannabis is allowed while driving.

City Administrator Hagen stated that the State prohibits it.

Councilmember Riley asked if it is prohibited by the State why it would be allowed in the City.

City Administrator Hagen noted that if they add cannabis to this it is redundant to State law and State law would supersede this.

Councilmember Howell asked if this new regulation would mean that someone could be ticketed for smoking tobacco in the City Hall parking lot.

City Administrator Hagen said yes.

Councilmember Howell noted that this seems a little petty.

Councilmember Specht stated that he has seen people smoking near the apartments down the road from City Hall and if they walk on the sidewalk towards City Hall they could then be in violation. He noted that this seems excessive and not necessary. He recommended the law specifically addressing City parks rather than all City land.

Councilmember Olson asked if tobacco use is currently handled under a policy as opposed to a law.

City Administrator Hagen stated that there is a statement within the Facility Use policy that addresses tobacco. He noted that this is not enforceable from a criminal aspect; however, if it falls within an ordinance it could be enforced.

Councilmember Olson asked if current policy addresses sidewalks and public spaces.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that this has been posted in parks, rental facilities, and warming houses.

Councilmember Olson asked if this complies with the Indoor Clean Air Act within buildings. He asked if there is anything that addresses outdoor use.

City Administrator Hagen stated that they do not have anything that addresses outdoor use in the form of an ordinance or policy.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that if someone was renting one of the open-air structures in the parks then it would be subject to the rental agreement.

Councilmember Olson asked if there is a policy that prohibits tobacco use in the public areas, such as at the DRAW during the summer concerts.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that there may be a policy that was adopted through a resolution accepting the no tobacco use signs from the Anoka County Health Department somewhere in the 1990s. He noted that since then additional no tobacco use signs have been placed. He stated that he is not sure where the written policy is. He added that there are these signs at the DRAW.

Councilmember Olson stated that it seems heavy handed to put all of this in the ordinances as it could result in discretionary enforcement.

Councilmember Specht noted that Police Chief Katers mentioned at the last meeting that tobacco use has not really been a problem.

Councilmember Howell added that if the discussion is for the inhalation of marijuana if this could be made more restrictive of an intoxicating vaporized smoked or aerosol product versus tobacco.

City Administrator Hagen stated that they can write this ordinance however the Council would like. He noted that they are addressing tobacco as the City does not currently have anything in place for tobacco which is very common amongst cities.

Mayor Kuzma recommended doing a policy on the cannabis only and leave tobacco smoking out of this discussion and the tobacco smoking could be revisited later if need be. He stated that if tobacco use is not currently a problem then it does not need to be fixed.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that the Council needs to figure out what problem they are trying to solve. He shared his opinion on regulating smoking of cannabis or tobacco at parks, not necessarily parking lots. He noted that edibles and chewing tobacco do not bother him as they do not affect others like smoke does.

Councilmember Riley stated that tobacco has not been a problem; however, he thought it had been controlled since there are no smoking signs in parks. He stated that he would like to see the no smoking in parks put into an ordinance so that it can be enforced. He noted that they are trying to get ahead of the potential issues that cannabis may cause.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he does not like cigarette butts all over that make City areas look dirty.

Councilmember Specht agreed that smoking regardless of substance should be regulated in parks.

Councilmember Woestehoff also mentioned parking structures versus parking lots as parking structures are more of a contained environment where the smoke could stay. He asked if a parking structure has to comply with the Indoor Clean Air Act.

City Administrator Hagen stated that this is considered an open air structure.

Councilmember Howell agreed with Councilmember Woestehoff about parking structures.

Councilmember Specht asked if they can control the parking structure.

City Administrator Hagen stated the City does own it and that people do smoke in the structure.

Councilmember Olson asked if trails were considered part of the parks.

City Administrator Hagen shared that he is understanding Council's direction to be that smoking should be regulated in parks, open air spaces within the parks, and the parking structure, while not regulating on sidewalks and trails.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he sees this as regulating whatever is zoned as a park, so if the park includes trails, then it would also be regulated there.

Councilmember Specht said that he would only like smoking to be regulated at the parks themselves and not the trails. He asked if there have been complaints about smoking in the parking structure.

City Administrator Hagen explained that this ordinance would be addressed mainly on a complaint basis.

Police Chief Katers noted that this would be a petty misdemeanor so it is not an arrestable offense and has a \$300 maximum fine. He added that the courts will set the amount and likely it will be pretty low. He reiterated that this would be regulated on a complaint only basis and they would not be out actively looking for noncompliance.

Councilmember Riley stated that the Council seems to be in agreement for regulating parks. He asked if there was interest in regulating smoking around City buildings on their grounds.

Councilmember Specht said he does not see a need for this.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that a person visiting City Hall is no different than a person visiting a park and they should be treated the same. He noted that he would prefer to not have smoking on City building grounds.

Mayor Kuzma agreed with Councilmember Woestehoff.

Councilmember Olson asked if they are still tying tobacco and cannabis together.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he is understanding this as cannabis should not be in parks on any City properties. He noted that for smoking tobacco they seem okay with it being on trails and streets.

Councilmember Howell agreed with Mayor Kuzma. She added that cannabis has a strong smell and she would not like everyone in the community to be around this.

Councilmember Specht stated that he would like the cannabis regulation to be on all City property and just tobacco regulation in parks.

Mayor Kuzma stated that he would also like to see tobacco regulated on City property.

Councilmember Woestehoff added that he does not care about the use of edibles and chewing tobacco as it does not affect other people. He stated that his perspective on this is around smoking regardless of the substance.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council was in agreement about no cannabis smoking on City owned land.

The Council was in agreement.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council was in agreement that edibles do not need to be regulated.

The Council was in agreement.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council was in agreement about no smoking of tobacco in City parks.

The Council was in agreement.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council was in agreement about no smoking of tobacco on the grounds of City owned properties.

Councilmember Specht stated that he is not worried about this.

Councilmember Howell asked where vaping falls into this.

City Administrator Hagen stated that vaping falls under tobacco related products.

Councilmember Howell explained that down the road, vaping will likely be a much bigger problem than products that are smoked as the particles are much smaller so there is no way for someone to know what they just walked through.

Councilmember Woestehoff agreed and shared that when he thinks of smoking he includes vaping in this as it does affect other people. He asked if this would be easier to structure if they were able to define what smoking is regardless of the substance.

City Administrator Hagen added that an easier structure would be to just treat all of the substances the same. He asked if they would like to categorize vaping similar to cannabis and not allow them on City owned property.

Councilmember Specht asked how many feet from a building this would be regulated.

City Administrator Hagen stated that for cannabis and vaping it would be out to the property line.

Councilmember Woestehoff explained that from a public health perspective, it is known that tobacco is bad and he sees that it should be considered the same as cannabis and vaping and an exception should not be made for it.

Councilmember Howell asked if tobacco was around the City Hall property how close to the building would they be able to smoke.

City Administrator Hagen stated that it would be allowed on all grounds, right outside of City Hall.

Councilmember Howell asked if it would be a huge problem to only allow people to smoke in their vehicles when on City properties.

Councilmember Specht stated that he does not see an issue with someone walking down the sidewalk in front of City Hall smoking a cigarette. He shared that this is the reason he does not want to regulate smoking on all public property.

Councilmember Riley suggested including City property in the ordinance but not include the trails or sidewalks.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council was in agreement with not allowing smoking tobacco in parks and structures within the parks, but would be allowed on properties with City buildings outside of 15 feet from the building.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would like smoking tobacco to not be allowed at all on City property.

Councilmember Woestehoff agreed.

The council was in agreement on not allowing smoking tobacco on City properties.

Councilmember Olson asked if this is attempting to solve a problem that does not exist.

City Administrator Hagen stated that this has not been a huge issue because if it was then it would have come forward a lot earlier.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that when he moved to Ramsey seven years ago, the number of smokers was one of the first things he noticed.

City Administrator Hagen asked for a consensus of tobacco smoking on trails.

The Council was in agreement to allow tobacco smoking on trails.

Councilmember Howell asked if people will be allowed to smoke in their vehicles in the parking lot of City owned buildings.

City Administrator Hagen stated that he currently understands this as not allowing it anywhere on the property, including in vehicles. He asked if they would like to exclude the parking lots.

Councilmember Howell stated that it seems excessive to regulate smoking in vehicles.

Councilmember Musgrove added that she does not see a problem with smoking tobacco in a private car in the parking lot.

Mayor Kuzma stated that if they have this ordinance, no one is going to make a complaint about someone smoking in their car.

Councilmember Specht noted that he still thinks it should just not be allowed within 15 feet of a building.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he would like this to stay as smoking tobacco is not allowed on City property.

Mayor Kuzma added that if they get a lot of complaints then this can be revisited.

Councilmember Olson stated that it feels like they are getting too far into the specifics and making this a very complicated ordinance for something that does not seem to be a huge issue. He added that this is becoming complicated beyond reason.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council would like to see this at another work session or if they would like Staff to draft up an ordinance that does not allow cannabis or vaping on any City property, and smoking tobacco is not allowed in parks, structures within the parks, or on properties with City facilities.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested bringing this back to a work session.

The consensus of the Council was to bring this discussion back to a future work session.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

Councilmember Specht shared that he would like to hear an update on the playground replacement policy.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission met at Alpine park this summer and noted that this is the next park on the list to be replaced. He noted that the Commission requested that Staff ensure that Solstice Park and Riverbend Park do not creep up on the scoring list. He added that there are also repairs being done at Riverdale.

Finance Director Lund stated that she will be starting the Capital Improvement Plan. She asked if the Council liked the 10 year CIP or if they would like to go back to the five year CIP.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he finds the 10 year CIP helpful as they are able to see what other projects are coming up.

Councilmember Woestehoff added that he also sees the 10 year CIP as helpful in terms of roads.

Councilmember Specht agreed that the 10 year CIP is helpful.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed with the 10 year CIP. She mentioned the licensing issue that a resident brought forward in regard to the Game Fair to make sure that this would be discussed at a later work session.

Councilmember Riley stated that Ramsey turns 50 years old next year and asked if this should be put on as a work session item to discuss what the City would like to do to celebrate.

City Administrator Hagen gave an update on the State bonding money for the water treatment plant as well as an update on this project.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Rokosz
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.